(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Defence scientists are aiming to fly an indigenously built hypersonic plane very soon;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that the hypersonic plane is three-times faster than the existing fighter aircraft;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) by when the ground tests of the above aircraft are going to take place?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The defence scientists have evolved the preliminary design of a hyperplane, based on which certain technology packages are being developed with participation of academic institutions, as lead in programme. However no project has been sanctioned for developing hyperplane.

(b) to (d) Does not arise.

Training of IAF Pilots on Hawk AJT

60. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the first batch of 25 IAF pilots has gone to UK for training on the Hawk Advanced Jet Trainers; and

(b) if so, by when the second and third batch of pilots will go to the UK to get training from the Royal Air Force?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) 75 IAF pilots will be trained in UK on Hawk aircraft over the next three and a half years. The induction rate is six to eight pilots every three months. The induction of first batch has not yet started. The second and third course is scheduled to commence on September 20,2004 and January 3,2005 respectively.

Defence Modernisation Fund

61. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have formulated Defence Modernisation Fund to tackle the chronic under-utilisation of the Defence Budget year after year;